THE DRAMATIC CENSOR;

OR,

WEEKLY THEATRICAL REPORT.

NUMBER I. Saturday, January 4, 1800.

Quid verum, atque decens curo, et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum.

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Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.

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***Dramatic Writers, who deſire to have an *early* Review of their Publications, are requeſted to ſend a Copy to the Editor, at the Printing Office.

IF ever, in the annals of Britiſh Dramatic Literature, the intervention of BOLD and UPRIGHT CRITICISM was wanted, to check the progreſs of falſe taſte; to reſcue Genius from oppreſſion, the Stage from proſtitution, and the national literary character from infamy, *at home*, and merited opprobrium, *abroad*:—if ſuch a period ever occurred in the Dramatic Hiſtory of this country; the preſent is avowedly the criſis, when ſuch intervention is moſt peremptorily demanded by imperious neceſſity. Avarice, combined with Dullneſs; Ignorance, with Pride; Arrogance, with Meanneſs; and the whole

of this unhallowed maſs fermented with the vile leaven of ſelfiſhneſs and venality, have long threatened, (and nearly accompliſhed thoſe threats) to obſcure the theatrical horizon with a total eclipſe; with worſe than Gothic darkneſs and barbarity; have threatened to re-eſtabliſh, if we may be permitted to adopt the metaphorical language of MILTON, the "reign of Chaos and Old Night!" Modeſt merit is no longer competent to wage unequal war againſt ſuch a powerful confederacy. Upſtart pretenders, hireling compilers, ſhameleſs plagiariſts, and conceited ſcribblers of the loweſt order, have, by dint of ſervility, temporizing cunning, and the ſacrifice of principle to ſordid intereſt, unhappily ſucceeded in obtaining complete poſſeſſion of the Stage, over which they rule and domineer with more than Oriental deſpotiſm. The baſe artifice, the fraud, the impoſture, by which they effected their uſurpation, they ſyſtematically employ to perpetuate their ſway, by poiſoning every channel of information; debauching the public taſte with reckleſs impunity; and gratifying the external organs of ſenſe, at the expence of intellectual fitneſs and enjoyment. Moral rectitude, mental independance, and the lucid emanations of Genius, inſtead of recommending the candidate for theatical honours to the patronage of theſe caterers for the town, are become the watch-word of proſcription, and the certain preſage of a general *Hue and Cry* againſt the daring individual, from whoſe talents they

they augur danger to the craft in which they have engaged. They deſcend to the loweſt ſtratagems; they regard neither character nor expence, to preſerve their ill-gotten power, and prevent the rays of truth from piercing the "palpable obſcure" in which they have ſo carefully ſhrouded their inſignificance. When their own efforts, aided with all the might of ſiniſter influence, and mercenary agents, appear inadequate to the taſk of cruſhing riſing merit, they then have recourſe to foreign co-operation, and ſubſidize an alien force to contend againſt the native talents of the country.

The diurnal prints, inſtead of exerciſing a wholeſome check upon theſe illicit proceedings, have, for the major-part, become acceſſaries to the deed, and lend their countenance to this traffic in literary proſtitution. Fallen, many of them, into the hands of illiterate proprietors, and conducted by editors, as unqualified and uninformed as their employers, they are vilely bungled and put together by perſons, who poſſeſs neither the faculty of ſound judgment, nor the virtue of critical integrity. Hence the ſyſtem of *toad-eating* opens a ready path to panegyric, and the dulleſt traſh, that ever was engendered in the human brain, may ſafely reckon on *Newspaper* ſupport, on the uſual terms of degraded venality.

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In this ſtate of abject degeneracy, the propriety and indeed neceſſity, of erecting a critical tribunal for the reformation of the Stage, will be diſputed by no lover of legitimate drama, and unvitiated taſte. The nature of the evil demands a remedy, which ſhall meet the complaint in its fulleſt extent. This the proprietors of THE DRAMATIC CENSOR, and WEEKLY THEATRICAL REPORT hope to provide in the work they now ſubmit to the candid judgment of an enlightened public. Embarking in the preſent undertaking, not from motives of ſpeculative emolument, but from a firm conviction of the utility of their plan, it is their fixed, irrevocable determination ſcrupulouſly to adhere to the principles on which that plan is founded. Theſe are, ſtrict impartiality, and undeviating critical integrity. They will neither ſacrifice to perſonal friendſhip, nor to pique. Truth is, and ſhall remain, the ſole object of their views. They will ſpeak with freedom, alike when the duties of their office call for cenſure, or for praiſe. And, though they ever muſt feel reluctant, when compelled to wound; they will perform this part of their cenſorial function with the conſcientious feelings of a humane ſurgeon, who probes a ſore, not for the purpoſe of inflicting pain, but as the neceſſary preliminary of a cure. If any individual ſhould at any time conceive himſelf aggrieved, THE DRAMATIC CENSOR ſhall always be open to him for redreſs. Remonſtrances drawn up with temper, and duly

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accredited with the writer's name, ſhall ever meet with proper attention, and even inſertion, if the circumſtances of the caſe ſhould ſo require. And on no occaſion, when it ſhall be proved, that we have erred in our judgment, will the Editor, on his part, be backward to acknowledge himſelf in the wrong.

As it is a leading feature in our plan to emancipate the Stage from the trammels of venality, the conductors of THE DRAMATIC CENSOR will not fail to impoſe a ſalutary reſtraint upon the wantonneſs and tyranny of the *News-papers*. In this view a free expoſure will be made of the *incapacity* and *profligacy* of our diurnal prints. We ſhall with pleaſure ſtep forward as the advocate and champion of every performer, whoſe character and merits ſhall be unjuſtly attacked by theſe *maſqued aſſaſſins*. In us they will meet with *bold* and *determined* adverſaries. We know their *power*, and their *malice*—the former we deſpiſe; and ſhall not neglect to thwart the latter.

To give the greater earneſt of impartial conduct, and that the public may have a ſtricter tie upon our integrity, the editor of THE DRAMATIC CENSOR diſdains to ſhroud either his weakneſs or his violence, under the ſafeguard of *anonymous* publication. He has boldly avowed his name, and truſts for his defence to the ſeven-fold ſhield of conſcious integrity and inward approval. This procedure, he is well-

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aware, is contrary to the eſtabliſhed *etiquette* of writers engaged in the critical department of literature; but whenever *custom* militates with *principle*, he never can prevail upon himſelf to make a ſacrifice of rectitude to *routine* and form.

For the ſame reaſons, which induce the Editor to avow himſelf, it is expected that all remonſtrances or communications of a *perſonal* nature, ſent by correſpondents for inſertion, ſhould be certified with the writer's name. On no other terms can their favours (articles of general intelligence are here excepted) be admitted into this work, as it is the determination of the proprietors of THE DRAMATIC CENSOR not to imitate the example of co-temporary periodical publications, by impoſing on the reader a ſeries of vamped-up compilations, and *manufactured* letters, *written by themſelves*, as genuine and original correſpondence.

It is likewiſe the intention of the conductors of this work to give a regular *critique* of all NEW DRAMAS, *publiſhed*, though not *acted*; eſpecially tranſlations from the German. The announced periodical publication, entitled *The German Theatre*, will claim their particular attention.

Having thus ſufficiently detailed the principles on which we mean invariably to act, we now proceed to give a retroſpect of the paſt week; briefly premiſing,

ſing, that for the ſake of doing juſtice to our plan, and to avoid the ill conſequences of precipitancy and raſhneſs, THE DRAMATIC CENSOR always cloſes its diſquiſitions with the performances of Thurſday night.

DRURY-LANE, *Thurſday, Dec.* 26, 1799.

LONDON MERCHANT. (*G. Lillo.*)—BLUE BEARD. (*G. Colman.*)

The holiday-ſeaſon very properly opened, at both houſes, with plays peculiarly adapted to impreſs a weighty moral upon the minds of the riſing generation. Conſidered, in reference to the great majority of a *Chriſtmas-audiente*, we do not know a ſingle drama better calculated to place the youth of the metropolis of a powerful commercial nation upon their guard againſt the ſnares, to which inexperienced innocence is but too often expoſed from female ſeduction, and the dangerous allurements of fallen beauty. It gave us, therefore, conſiderable pleaſure to ſee the pit and galleries crowded to their utmoſt capacity, before the drawing-up of the curtain. The Boxes were, likewiſe, very reſpectably filled.

With reſpect to the performance, the only novelty conſiſted in the part of *Maria*, which was perſonated,

nated, for the *first time*, by Miſs HEARD. This amiable actreſs poſſeſſes from nature a refined ſenſibility of ſoul, ſtrictly congenial with the character ſhe repreſented. We have only to regret the conſtitutional delicacy of her frame, which ſeems inadequate to the vocal exertion, which the theatrical profeſſion ſo frequently demands. Some of her occaſional tones, however, convince us, that *judicious* attention, and ſkilful *management* of her voice, under the auſpices of an intelligent friend, would enable her, in a great meaſure, to overcome the obſtacles, which diffidence, and a degree of native modeſty, rarely to be met with in the profeſſion, throw in her way.

Mrs. POWELL, in the character of *Millwood*, exceeded what we had a right to expect, conſidering her ill-ſtate of health, being ſeized with ſo violent an indiſpoſition at the *rehearſal* in the morning, that it was doubtful, even a few hours previous to the performance, whether ſhe would be able to go through her part. Her dreſs was diſtinguiſhed for taſte and elegance.

Young KEMBLE, as *Barnwell*, ſhowed himſelf an *improving* actor. As the repreſentative of a youth of eighteen, his *manner*, which in *graver* characters is too *puerile*, ſets him off to conſiderable advantage.

The play was ſucceeded by the popular entertainment of *Blue-Beard*. This *ſpectacle*, notwithſtanding

ſtanding the loſs of *attitudinarian* intereſt it has ſuſtained by the ſeceſſion of PARISOT, ſtill continues to attract crowded houſes. The intrinſic merit of the dialogue has been already ſo amply diſcuſſed, and ſo unanimous is the verdict of all intelligent critics upon this ſubject, that any further comment would be totally ſuperfluous. Miſs DECAMP need never wiſh to have a better *foil* to her exquiſite ſtyle of acting, than the puny efforts of Mr. KELLY and Mrs. CROUCH. They may be *ſingers*, but never ſhould attempt to *perform*.

COVENT-GARDEN, *Thurſday, Dec.* 26, 1799.

JANE SHORE. (*N. Rowe.*)—VOLCANO, OR THE RIVAL HARLEQUINS. (*Author's* name LEGION "for "they are *many*! compriſing the whole catalogue of Machiniſts, Scene-painters, Dancers. Tumblers, Buffoons, &c. &c. in the ſervice of the Theatre.)

This play, in reſpect to the wholeſome leſſon it inculcates to the fairer half of the riſing generation, evinces the ſame laudable attention to moral inſtruction, on the part of the Managers of Covent-Garden Theatre, which we before took occaſion to commend, on behalf of the proprietors of Drury-Lane. To draw a compariſon between the ſtyle in which this tragedy is got up at the two houſes would be a very invidious taſk. All thoſe of our

readers, who have witneſſed the performance of the elder KEMBLE, in the character of *Haſtings*, muſt be convinced, that the ſtage cannot ſtart his *rival* in that line.

But, though, from a delicate reluctance to wound, we forbear to expatiate upon *acknowledged inferiority*, it becomes a duty of paramount obligation to canvaſs the pretenſions of ſelf-ſufficiency, and *reputed* excellence. Faſhion, and a certain predispoſition to praiſe, becauſe the hired applauſes of venal critics have given the ſtamp of merit to any favoured individual, bear a great ſway in influencing the public voice. It has been ſo long the practice (eſpecially with two or three papers, conducted by perſons in habits of intimacy with the party) to extoll the performances of Mrs. POPE, that we are well aware any attempt to weigh the merits of that actreſs in a *juſt* balance, muſt expect to meet with reſiſtance from prejudice and intereſted partiality. The difficulty of the enterprize, however; inſtead of deterring, ſerves only to ſtrengthen our determination to make the experiment. To correct the falſe taſte of the town, is one of the principal objects we have in view; and, however far we may fall ſhort in the *execution* of this deſign, the merit of *good intentions* ſhall, at leaſt, be ours.

It will readily be granted, that penitence and contrition form the leading features in the character of

of *Jane Shore*, as pourtrayed by the author. The *ſemblance*, then, of theſe virtuous emotions ought to conſtitute the leading *traits* in the performer's delineation. Humility and a ſenſe of conſcious ſhame for paſt guilt, ought to pervade the whole manner and ſtyle of acting. Whatever bears the remoteſt affinity to perſonal vanity; whatever evinces too ſedulous an attention to graceful forms, and *studied attitudes*; whatever ſavours of affectation, ſelf-complacence, and *ſelf-homage*, ought to be carefully avoided. Yet theſe very faults, conſtitute the prominent characteriſtics of Mrs. POPE's performance. Her whole ſoul ſeems to be engroſſed with the ſtudy of attitudes and poſtures; how to diſplay to the beſt advantage a genteel ſhape; how to mould her body into unnatural, and difficult, becauſe unnatural diſtortions; how moſt conſpicuouſly to ſport a graceful *contour* of form, and prove the flexibility of her limbs. Her very looks are artificial, and betray an exceſs of female vanity. We enter the more largely into our remarks on this ſubject, becauſe the ſame diſguſting affectation mars her performance in every ſingle character ſhe repreſents. Mrs. POPE would do well to take a leſſon from the *Jane Shore*, of Mrs. SIDDONS.

MR. POPE would greatly improve, if he could ſucceed in getting rid of that *ſchool-boy whine*, when he aims at *pathos*; and correct that mixture of affectation and exaggerated declamation, which at

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preſent prove ſuch powerful drawbacks on his profeſſional merit.

In the next repreſentation of this play, we would recommend to *Haſtings* to fence a little better, in his encounter with *Dumont*. He ſuffers himſelf to be diſarmed by his antagoniſt with a degree of facility and want of ſkill, that might tempt a ſpectator to conclude, the proud and angry lord had never handled a ſword before.

The ſecond repreſentation of the new pantomime ſucceeded the tragedy. As this ſpecies of entertainment is avowedly exempt from the juriſdiction of *regular* dramatic criticiſm, we ſhall not examine its merits by the rigid rules of art. There are, however, certain laws to which even pantomimic compoſition is ſubject. Among theſe, we reckon it an eſſential requiſite, that all the tricks and changes introduced into the piece, however wonderful and extravagant in themſelves, ſhould poſſeſs ſome apparent connection with the plot. No diſguiſe, no incident, no ſituation ſhould take place, that ſtands *iſolated* from the main buſineſs. A viſible concatenation of all the ſubordinate parts, and their individual reference to the final object in view, ſhould be clearly aſcertainable throughout the whole. In this reſpect, the new pantomime is woefully deficient. Many of the changes and tricks are quite *extraneous* to the plot; and the plot

itſelf

itſelf is ill conceived, and ſtill more miſerably ſupported. The *Rival Harlequins* repeatedly ſhift their dreſs without any evident purpoſe; the metamorphoſis of a barrel-organ into a knife-grinder's apparatus; a box into a tea-table and equipage; the equipment of the *Clown* in the character of the *Hog-in-armour*; and various other tranſmutations, are ſo many *ſolitary*, *detached* magical operations, which in no ſhape whatever affect the thread of the ſtory; whereas, by judicious management, they might eaſily be made the ſource of conſiderable merriment A ſtill groſſer inſtance of the violation of the laws of pantomime occurs in the ſcene, where *Harlequin White-ſword*, is forcibly ſeized upon by the agents of *Cratero*, and carried on the ſhoulders of four furies to the infernal regions, though all this time he retains poſſeſſion of the enchanted wooden weapon, conferred upon him by *Floridel*, and which, by all the rules of pantomime, guarantees the wearer from every kind of rival violence, and miſhap. This is an outrage of propriety, which calls loudly for redreſs.

Not, however, to appear too hypercritical, we ſhall wave all farther objections of this nature, and briefly obſerve, that the opening ſcene of the new pantomime is highly intereſting. The repreſentation of the Volcano, and the fight in the air between *Floridel* and *Cratero*, may with juſtice claim the epithet of grand and magnificent. In our

opinion,

opinion, it would conſiderably have heightened the effect, if the *volcano-ſcene* had been introduced a ſecond time, at the concluſion of the pantomime. The agent of *Cratero*, inſtead of being hunted down by a band of furies, might have been puniſhed by his forcible precipitation into the flaming gulph.

It is but an act of juſtice to add, that the ſongs, recitatives, &c. in the new pantomime, (with the exception of the *execrable* duet between EMERY and SIMMONS) far ſurpaſs, in poetic merit, what we generally meet with in compoſitions of this nature. The omiſſion of the *Iriſh ſhip-builder's* ſong is, likewiſe, no detriment to the piece. The *Duett* ought poſitively to be cancelled. It preſents a ſpecimen of the vileſt ribaldry ever rehearſed on the ſtage, poſſeſſing no claim whatever to humour, wit, drollery, or any other qualification, except vulgar indecency. We were, therefore, greatly pleaſed to ſee it meet with conſiderable oppoſition and the moſt unequivocal marks of diſapprobation, on the part of the audience. It is entirely indebted to the irreſiſtible drollery of SIMMONDS, in the character of a *female* ballad-ſinger, for its toleration. Yet, ſuch is the depraved taſte of *Newſpaper* critics, that this execrable ballad found zealous advocates in the *Oracle* and the *Times*. The latter paper expreſsly obſerves, that it was *deſervedly* encored.

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Having touched upon the ſubject of *News-paper* criticiſms, we cannot refrain from noticing a flagrant inſtance of the little faith that is to be placed in the reports of theſe ſuperficial journaliſts. The *Morning Herald*, of *Dec.* 24, after a laboured panegyric on the new pantomime, particularly extolls a ſkittle-ground ſcene, in which the pins riſe up again of their own accord, as faſt as they are knocked down. This is evidently a *critique* ſent to that paper from the Theatre, no ſuch ſcene having taken place in the courſe of the pantomime. We would recommend to the editor, as a neceſſary preliminary towards *criticiſing* a piece, to *witneſs* its repreſentation.

Nor can we ſuffer the malignant ſcurrility of the *True-Briton* to paſs without animadverſion. The obtruſion of politics, calculated ſolely to ſour and embitter the mind, on theatrical amuſements, muſt ever meet with decided diſapprobation from all enlightened readers. The *True-Briton*, however, with its wonted diſregard of principle and decorum, cannot ſee a knife-grinder introduced in a pantomine, without making this circumſtance the vehicle of a groſs and perſonal attack upon individuals. It ought not to be forgotten, that the *True-Briton* is the identical paper, which not long ſince contained a libel of the moſt unwarrantable nature upon Mr. FAWCETT, reſpecting his performance, as *Junk*, in the *Birth-day*. It is a hard caſe, indeed, that mankind

mankind ſhould not be ſuffered to unbend and relax their minds from care, without having the ſour leaven of party-politics crammed down their throats!—It were better for this paper, with all its *pride*, (QUI CAPIT, ILLE FACIT) *to conſent to copy*, than to inſert ſuch vile ribaldry of its *own*.

It is ſuperfluous to add, that the Theatre overflowed in every quarter. The ſeveral performers in the pantomime acquitted themſelves with great credit. Mrs. PARKER, as *Columbine*, was honoured, as ſhe deſerved, with repeated plaudits; and *White-Sword*, and *Black-Sword* were *rival* Harlequins in *ſkill*, as well as in *name*.

DRURY-LANE, *Friday*, *Dec.* 27, 1799.

BEGGAR'S OPERA. (*J. Gay.*)—BLUE BEARD. (*G. Colman.*)

Independent of a variety of collateral cauſes, connected with the lapſe of time, which have nearly abrogated the intereſt of this once popular play, we cannot help attributing the bad houſes it now draws, to the dull, ſpiritleſs and inſipid manner, in which *Captain Mackheath*, the principal character in the piece, is perſonated by Mr. KELLY. There can be no doubt, that the author intended to exhibit in his hero the portrait of a diſſipated libertine, gifted by nature with all the qualifications

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which enter into the compoſition of a *bon-vivant*, a man of faſhion, and intrigue, but whoſe expenſive follies have reduced him to the neceſſity of flying to lawleſs courſes to ſupport his thoughtleſs career of pleaſure and extravagance. Gallantry, humour, levity, ſprightlineſs, and a certain ſenſe of honour, which never forſakes him even in the very vortex of depravity, conſtitute eſſential requiſites in the delineation.

But, in vain will the ſpectator look for theſe characteriſtics in Mr. KELLY's performance. His manner evinces a total want of feeling and conception; it is uniformly dull and inanimate, conveying the idea of an *automaton*, wrought upon by unſeen hands, to counterfeit certain ſounds and motions, in which the *figure* is altogether unintereſted. His look, inſtead of exhibiting the *index* of a bold intrepid mind, is the very perſonification of effeminacy, and a palſied tone of nerve. His voice, eſpecially in the dialogue, is one *monotonous croak*; and when he ſings, the pleaſure, which his muſical talents might poſſibly afford to ſcientific ears, is more than counter-balanced by the outrage, which his dull, mechanical ſtyle of acting offers to the eye of taſte. *Acting*, indeed, we ought not to call it, but rather, in the words of the litany of the church, to deſcribe the part, as *ſaid*, or *ſung*, by Mr. KELLY. To flaſh ſtill more potently on the minds of the audience the conviction

of his incapacity, the ſpirited performance of Miſs De Camp, in the character of *Lucy*, (which may, with ſtrict juſtice, be pronounced a *chef-d'oeuvre* of theatrical excellence) operates as a damning contraſt to the imbecillity of her partner.

The truth is, that the rage for *ſing-ſong*, and *guttural*, as well as *manual*, dexterity, abſtracted from ſentiment, has ſo entirely bewitched the town, that *ſound* and *execution*, both *vocal* and *inſtrumental*, may boaſt a complete triumph over ſenſe, and moral propriety. This it is, that countenances Mr. Kelly in his *caricature* of *Capt. Mackheath* :—or, perhaps, we are guilty of a miſnomer, in terming his performance *a caricature*; as, inſtead of overcharging the character, he renders it feeble, tame, and inſignificant. Dramatic juſtice does not require, that *Mackheath* ſhould be an *Italian* ſinger; but that he ſhould preſerve the character of a man of gallantry, intrepidity, gaiety, and eaſe, is an indiſpenſible requiſite. For our part, we are under no apprehenſions of committing ourſelves, when we add, that Bannister, with all his muſical inferiority to Kelly, would give a far more ſatifactory delineation of the part.

The entertainment conſiſted, as on the preceeding night, of *Blue-Beard*.

COVENT-

COVENT GARDEN, *Friday, Dec.* 27, 1799.

LOVER'S VOWS. (*manufactured*, from the German of *Kotzebue*, by *Mrs. Inchbald*)——VOLCANO &c. as before.

Whatever defects, on a rigid ſcrutiny, may appear in the plot of this play, we conſider it, in the aggregate, as the beſt of all the dramas, which have been adapted to the Engliſh ſtage, from the prolific pen of *Kotzebue*; and we give the lady, who has acquired ſo much celebrity and profit by *dreſſing* German plays, great credit for the manner in which ſhe has, on this occaſion, acquitted herſelf. We have only to regret the long train of contingent evils, which the favorable reception this play experienced, on its firſt repreſentation, has produced, by proving the efficient cauſe of the eſtabliſhment of the vile *tranſlating manufactory*, which commenced with Miſs PLUMTRE's verſion of *The Natural Son*, (a publication, by the bye, on which that lady has very little reaſon to plume herſelf, as ſhe is but the *Jack Daw* in the fable, ſtrutting in * *feathers not her own*,

* The writer of this article may claim a right to ſpeak with freedom on this ſubject, as he himſelf is the perſon, who rendered Miſs PLUMTRE's tranſlation *fit* for the preſs. Having authority and proof for every aſſertion he advances, he boldly adds, that there are not ten ſucceſſive lines of Miſs PLUMTRE's writing in the whole work. This remark is not intended to convey the ſlighteſt reflection on Mr. PHILLIPS, the publiſher, who

own, as we ſhall in the ſequel have an opportunity of demonſtrating, even to the ſatisfaction of the *Critical Review*), and has ſince been carried to an extent, which threatens to reduce literature to the level of mechanical labor.

But, to return from this digreſſion to the immediate conſideration of the play itſelf, we muſt take the liberty of offering a few remarks, relative to *coſtume*, on the dreſs, in which Mr. *Anhalt*, the German clergyman, makes his appearance on Covent Garden ſtage. All thoſe of our readers, who, like the writer of this article, have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with German manners, by a long reſidence in that country, will agree with us in queſtioning the propriety of Mr. *Anhalt's* habit, which, inſtead of reſembling the garb of a village paſtor, bears a greater reſemblance to the pontificals of a dignitary of the church. A plain black, or even *brown*, coat

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who certainly ſtands juſtified in employing every means to render a tranſlation, in which his intereſt and character, as a bookſeller of repute, are alike implicated, fit to meet the public eye. The truth is, Miſs PLUMTRE, by one of thoſe fortunate contingencies, which not unfrequently confer the palm of merit on imbecillity and plodding dullneſs, has acquired a degree of *factitious* celebrity, which requires only a *free expoſition of facts*, to be overthrown, and for ever annihilated. Her knowledge of the German is totally inadequate to the taſk of tranſlation, nor is ſhe, as a writer, miſtreſs of the Engliſh language.

would

would have been infinitely more in character. His unpowdered curly pate is, likewiſe, totally inconſiſtent with clerical *coſtume*. The paſtor of the pooreſt village in the Empire, would conceive it a degradation of his function, not to ſport a full-bottomed wig, with at leaſt twelve rows of curls, and powdered in due form.

Mr. *Anhalt's* hat offers another ſubject of neceſſary animadverſion. Originally the divine made his appearance in a kind of college or trencher-hat; but as the impropriety of ſuch an apendage to the pate of a German clergyman, has probably been pointed out to the managers, they have corrected one abſurdity, by having recourſe to another:—and Mr. *Anhalt* now ſports a ſimple *round* hat, which would ſubject the wearer to the cenſure of eccleſiaſtical contumacy in a country where a triangular hat, with the ſides ſcarcely riſing to a level with the crown, is conſidered as an eſſential part of the ſacerdotal livery.

Dum vitant ſtulti vitia, in contraria currunt.

Of the merits of the principal performers we cannot ſpeak in too favourable terms. Mr. MURRAY, in the character of *Wildenhain*; Mr. KNIGHT, as the repreſentative of Count *Caſſel*; Mrs. H. JOHNSTONE, as *Amelia*, and Mrs. JOHNSON, as *Agatha*; acquitted themſelves with great

great ſucceſs. Mr. POPE, likewiſe, ſupported the part of *Frederick* with credit, and could he but get rid of his inſufferable *whine*, would be entitled to ſuperior commendation. Mr. H. JOHNSTONE performed the part of *Anhalt* with dignity and feeling.

In the abſence of Mr. MUNDEN, the ludicrous character of the *rhyming Butler*, was undertaken by Mr. SIMMONS; who, it is but juſtice to add, approved himſelf a very able ſubſtitute, and gave promiſe of conſiderable comic talents.

Several judicious alterations and curtailments took place in the repreſentation of the *New Pantomime*. Inſtead of the repetition of the dance, of furies with their flambeaux, they now make their appearance, armed with ſwords and blood-ſtained ſhields, a change which, at leaſt, poſſeſſes the merit of variety.

DRURY-LANE, *Saturday, Dec.* 28, 1799.

PIZARRO. (another of *Kotzebue's* plays, from the *manufactory* of *R. B. Sheridan*, Eſq.)—The MOCK DOCTOR *(H. Fielding.)*

The merits of this *Serio-Farcico-Tragico-Comico-Pantomime*, have been already ſo amply diſcuſſed, not only in all our periodical vehicles of criticiſm, but, likewiſe, in a variety of diſtinct eſſays

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and publications, that all farther comment on this head would be both ſuperfluous and impertinent. We ſhall, therefore, content ourſelves with remarking, that all the abſurdities, inconſiſtencies, and blunders, which candid and intelligent criticiſm diſcovered, and pointed out for alteration, in the courſe of the former ſeaſon, ſtill continue in their original ſtate, uncorrected and unimproved.—The effeminacy of *Alonzo's* dreſs, better adopted for a ball-room than for ſcenes of warfare; the *magnificence* of the Spaniſh dungeon, in a country where the Spaniſh invaders were fain to put up with tents for their own accommodation; the vile manner in which the ſcene is bungled together, where *Cora* leaves her infant child to the fury of the pitileſs ſtorm, whilſt a hut ſtands moſt invitingly in ſight; the abſurd introduction of *Cora's* ſong to the *accompaniment* of thunder and lightening—but, above all, the diſgraceful additions made by Mr. SHERIDAN himſelf, with the farcical termination of this ſublime tragedy, by an *Iriſh howl* over the dead body of *Rolla*;—all theſe glaring defects, ſufficient to damn any writer of leſs notoriety than SHERIDAN, ſtill continue to outrage good-ſenſe, and the feelings of every ſpectator of taſte and diſcernment. Probably, Mr. SHERIDAN may deem it derogatory to his dignity and conſequence to ſubmit to advice, though even his own judgment muſt convince him of the juſtice and propriety of the

the ſuggeſtions which are offered to his attention. Probably his motto may be

——*Populus me ſibilat; at mihi plaudo*
Ipſe domi, ſimul ac nummos contemplor in arca.

Yet, making every allowance for the magic of a great name; making every allowance for the irreſiſtible attractions of *ſhow* and *ſound*, we are firmly of opinion, that the crowded houſes this play ſtill continues to draw, are principally to be attributed to the maſterly acting of the ELDER KEMBLE. We ſhall not attempt the hopeleſs taſk of defining the merits of this inimitable performer, whoſe profeſſional character cannot, perhaps, be more juſtly drawn, than by a trifling parody of the ſpeech, he himſelf ſo well delivers, as the repreſentative of *Rolla*. We ſhall, therefore, if we may be permitted to make the alteration, deſcribe him as "a tow-"ering plantain, which throws its auguſt ſhade to "distant plains, and ſuffers no rival excellence to "thrive and flouriſh beneath it."

In conſequence of the ſeceſſion of Mrs. JORDAN, the part of *Cora* has this ſeaſon been transferred to Miſs BIGGS, who acquits herſelf with reputation. A certain Morning-paper, which arrogates to itſelf the *name* of an ORACLE, has attempted to undervalue this lady's merits, by inſinuating that the abſurdity of *Cora's* chaunting a ditty in the midſt of a thunder-ſtorm never ſtruck any critic, whilſt

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the part reſted with Mrs. JORDAN. Now it moſt unfortunately happens, for the confutation of this ſelf-ſame ORACLE, that the writer of theſe remarks, in his *Notes on Pizarro*, expatiated at full length on this very ſubject, and had the *Pythia*, who preſides at the *tripod* of the ORACLE, been in the habit of *reading*, as well as of delivering *ipſe-dixits*, the conductor of that paper would have found the whole of our remarks detailed in an extract given from *Pizarro with Notes*, in the *New London Review*.

In the Entertainment of the *Mock-Doctor*, the entire intereſt of the piece reſts avowedly with Mr. BANNISTER, whoſe gay and ſprightly humour never fals to pleaſe.

COVENT-GARDEN, *Saturday, Dec.* 28, 1799. THE WISE-MAN OF THE EAST. (Manufactured from *Kotzebue's* German manuſcript, by Mrs. *Inchbald*).—VOLCANO, &c.

When the Managers of a Theatre give 250 guineas to a German play-wright for a *manuſcript*, and 500 guineas more to an Engliſh dramatiſt for *dreſſing* it; we certainly expect to meet with a production of ſuperlative merit; a production, to which the native genius of the country is wholly inadequate, and which, therefore, muſt be imported from foreign regions at an exorbitant price.

Such was the general ſentiment of the town, whilſt *Kotzebue's* play was preparing for the ſtage. But the illuſion ſoon vaniſhed, when its public repreſentation afforded an opportunity of duly appreciating its claims. It then appeared, that *high price* was its chief recommendation; and that neither the German author, nor the Engliſh *dreſſer*, with all their individual and combind talents, had atchieved a taſk beyond the compaſs of very moderate abilities. Defective in plot; faulty alike, in execution and deſign; ill-written, with reſpect to language; and diſgraced with repeated grammatical blunders; had it been the production of a writer of our own country, truſting entirely to his own powers, unaided by a celebrity ill-deſerved, there is little doubt, but this ſelf-ſame *Wiſe Man* would have been hooted off the Stage, as a vile impoſtor, as a pretended conjurer, who poſſeſſed not ſufficient foreſight to tell his own fortune. But backed with the magic of *Kotzebue's* name, and the equally over-rated talents of the fair lady, who "fights "under the ſeven-fold ſhield of that Great Man! it ſucceeded, though (greatly to the credit of the returning good ſenſe of the town) not without conſiderable oppoſition, in making a ſtand againſt taſte and judicious criticiſm; and will, probably, be permitted to linger out the ſeaſon, in which attempt it will certainly meet with due encouragement, on behalf of the manager, in hopes of *re-imburſing himſelf for the

* We underſtand Mr. HARRIS has diſpoſed of the Copy-Right of the *Wiſe Man of the Eaſt* to Mr. ROBINSON, the bookſeller, for 200 Guineas; with a reſerved clauſe to receive 50 Guineas more, in caſe the Play has a run of 30 nights.

large

large ſums which he has ſquandered away on its production.

As both Mrs. INCHBALD's Play, and a literal tranſlation of *Kotzebue's* manuſcript are now in print, it is our intention to give an analytical criticiſm of their reſpective merits. But the great length to which the preceding articles have extended; added to the copiouſneſs of our introductory abſtract, oblige us to poſtpone this part of our plan till the next numher. Meanwhile, juſtice to the German Dramatiſt requires of us to notice, that *Kotzebue* is not accountable for the diſgraceful ſcenes in the under-plot, in which the reſpectable ſociety of Quakers are dragged forth to public ridicule. The whole merit of this execrable *farrago* of dulneſs, illiberality and indecency, reſts entirely with *Mrs. Inchbald.*

Neither is the young Merchant's character, in the original, blackened with the dye of cool, premeditated villainy, and the infamous deſign againſt the honour of a virtuous girl, to whom he owes his deliverance from ruin. This is another of *Mrs. Inchbald's improvements!* In the German author his character appears in the moſt amiable light.

Ava's ſilly whim, likewiſe, of giving himſelf out for dead, and paſſing for a conjuror, is entirely *Mrs. Inchbald's* ingenious invention.

But waving, for the preſent, all farther conſideration of the *intrinſic* merits of the Play, we ſhall ever feel diſpoſed

diſpoſed to regard the *Wiſe Man of the Eaſt*, with an indulgent eye, as having proved the contingent means of bringing *Miſs Murray's* talents fairly before the public. The *chaſte*, and yet *feeling*, ſtyle, in which ſhe acted the part of *Ellen*, evinces powers of no ordinary caſt; and holds out the fair promiſe of great future excellence. But, as we make it an invariable rule, neither to cenſure, nor applaud, without ſtating our reaſons, we are reluctantly compelled (having poſtponed our analyſis of the Play to a future opportunity) to defer till then our comments on the merits of the Performers.

DRURY LANE, *Monday, Dec.* 30, 1799. DOUGLAS. *(J. Home.)*—CHILDREN IN THE WOOD. *(Morton.)*

The chief recommendation this Tragedy poſſeſſes in the repreſentation, conſiſts in the excellent acting of *Mrs. Siddons*. The part of *Old Norval*, in conſequence of the indiſpoſition of *Mr. Aickin*, was performed by *Mr. Powell*, who ſuſtained the character with great ability. *Mr. Cory*, appeared as the repreſentative of *Glenalvon*. This gentleman is endowed by nature with the eſſential requiſites of a good actor. His voice is powerful, and uncommonly melodious; and his figure ſtriking. But we muſt beg leave to remind him, that "to whom much is *given*, of the ſame will much, likewiſe, be *required*." Young *Kemble* is a diligent performer, but wants

Owing to an accident, which *Mrs.* CROUCH met with on Friday night, and which brought on conſequences not apprehended at the time, a ſudden change unavoidably took place in the evening's entertainment; for which *Blue-Beard* had been advertiſed in the bills. Printed hand-bills, announcing the change and its cauſe, had been poſted up, early in the afternoon. This, however, did not prevent a diſturbance, which the papers of the next morning thought proper to dignify with the title of a *riot*, taking place in the *upper regions*, when the good holiday-folks ſaw themſelves diſappointed in their hopes of being regaled with their favourite *ſpectacle*. After ſeveral fruitleſs attempts, on the part of SUETT, Mr. BANNISTER, with ſome difficulty, ſucceeded in pacifying them.

COVENT-GARDEN, *Monday, Dec.* 30, 1799.

HENRY IV. *(Shakeſpeare)* VOLCANO.

We cannot give a very favourable report of the manner, in which this inimitable play of our great dramatic bard is caſt at this houſe. Mr. HOLMAN is but a very indifferent *Hotſpur:* he *mouths* his part too much; and, when we look for the dignified deportment of KEMBLE—but we forbear invidious compariſons. Mr. LEWIS, too, is ill qualified for the repreſentative of the youthful *Prince of Wales*. He ſhould

remember, that there are certain characters, in the delineation of which an actor does not improve from *long experience*.

Fawcett was the *Falſtaff* of the night; but we cannot compliment him on his ſucceſs. There is a certain coarſeneſs in his humour, which accords not with *Shakeſpeare's* conception of this original character.—The unrivalled excellence, however, of the play, the rich ſallies of wit, and maſterly touches of the author, bore it through every circumſtance of diſadvantage, with *eclat*.

This play, if we are rightly informed, has been ſuffered to lie dormant at the other theatre, for want of a *Fallſtaff*. If we may judge from the manner in which *Father Philip* is acted, in the *Caſtle Spectre*, Mr. R. PALMER would be no unable ſucceſſor to his late brother, as the repreſentative of *Falſtaff*.

DRURY-LANE, *Tueſday, Dec.* 31, 1799.

PIZARRO, (from the firm of *Kotzebue* and *Sheridan.*)—The APPRENTICE. (*Arthur Murphy.*)

The entertainment poſſeſſes this ſtriking advantage over the play, that it *is*, what it *profeſſes* to be —a *Farce*.

COVENT

COVENT-GARDEN, *Tueſday, Dec.* 31, 1799.

The DRAMATIST. *(J. Reynolds.)*—VOLCANO, &c.

All the characters in this comedy are well maintained by their ſeveral repreſentatives. Mr. FARLEY was very happy in his perſonation of the lively *Florival*; and Mrs. LITCHFIELD, as *Marianne*, evinced much archneſs, and no mean comic powers.

DRURY-LANE, *Wedneſday, Jan.* 1, 1800.

The BELLE'S STRATAGEM. *(Mrs. Cowley.)*—LODOISKA. *(Mr. J. Kemble.)*

This play is vilely got up. The *auction-ſcene*, in particular, would be diſgraceful to the moſt paltry provincial theatre. Nor is the *Maſquerade*, in Act IV. much better managed.—We ſhall take a future opportunity of enlarging upon this topic.

The part of *Lady Frances Touchwood* was *done* by Miſs CAMPBELL. If this actreſs owes her introduction to the boards of Drury-lane to her profeſſional merit, we have her qualifications ſtill to diſcover.

Miſs BIGGS was the repreſentative of *Letitia Hardy*, and acquitted herſelf with great and merited applauſe.

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On account of the illneſs of Mr. BARRYMORE, the part of *Doricourt*, was ſuſtained, at a ſhort notice, by Mr. ARCHER.

The grand *ſpectacle* of LODOISKA, after lying in a ſtate of dormant inaction for three years, was this evening revived, to act as a rival to the New Pantomime of Covent-Garden. Though brought out under peculiar diſadvantages, reſulting from the indiſpoſition of ſeveral of the leading performers, it was received with great applauſe, and attracted one of the beſt houſes, at *half price*, the theatre has witneſſed for ſome time.

Miſs DE CAMP was the ſubſtitute of Mrs. CROUCH, as *Lodoiſka*, in which character ſhe appeared to ſuch great advantage, that, on any other occaſion, than the illneſs of her predeceſſor, we ſhould have loudly rejoiced in the change. Mr. C. KEMBLE, in conſequence of Mr. BARRYMORE's indiſpoſition, undertook the part of *Khera Khan*, at a few hours' notice. Mr. SUETT diſplayed his wonted humour, in his old character of *Verbal*. His *drollery* forms a pleaſing contraſt to the *apathy* of KELLY.

COVENT

COVENT-GARDEN, *Wedneſday, Jan.* 1, 1800.

MANAGEMENT. *(J. Reynolds.)*—VOLCANO, &c.

This play being one of the novelties of the preſent ſeaſon, we reſerve our remarks till the next number, when we ſhall enter into a full analyſis of its merits.

DRURY-LANE, *Thurſday Jan.* 2 1800.

BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE. *(Mrs. Centlivre.)*—LODOISKA.

We were extremely gratified at ſeeing the univerſally eſteemed and reſpected Manager of this theatre, Mr. AICKIN, reſume his profeſſional functions, after a ſerious indiſpoſition, which gave general concern to every perſon acquainted with his worthy and amiable character. He ſupported the part of *Obadiah*, with his wonted accuracy and chaſteneſs.

HOLLINGSWORTH, as the real *Simon Pure*, approved himſelf a very bad quaker.

COVENT-GARDEN, *Thurſday, Jan.* 2, 1800.

The WISE MAN OF THE EAST. *(Kotzebue* and *Inchbald.)*—VOLCANO, &c.

We

We have already ſtated our reaſons for poſtponing the Review of this play. We ſhall, therefore, only add, at preſent, that it does not appear to *gain much on the town.*

DRAMATIC INTELLIGENCE.

THE long promiſed Drama of *Joanna of Montfaucon*, preparing for repreſentation at Covent Garden, by Mr. CUMBERLAND, appears to be at length in a train of ſpeedy production. The Muſic is compoſed by Mr. BUSBY, a gentleman, who has acquired conſiderable celebrity by his laſt year's Oratorio of *Prophecy*. Mr. INCLEDON has two ſongs, one martial, the other amatory. Miſs WATERS two ſongs, in the *Penſoroſo* ſtyle. Mr. MUNDEN, as the leader of a band of Mountaineers, ſings a humorous ditty. Appropriate Symphonies precede each Act.—There have been two muſical Rehearſals in the courſe of the week, and a full Rehearſal is expected to take place on Monday.

☞ Owing to the great preſſure of matter, we are obliged to defer our Review of The *German Theatre* till next week.

DRURY

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BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE *(Mrs. Centlivre*—LODOISKA.

We were extremely gratified at ſeeing the univerſally eſteemed and reſpected Manager of this theatre, Mr. AICKIN, reſume his profeſſional functions, after a ſerious indiſpoſition, which gave general concern to every perſon acquainted with his worthy and amiable character. He ſupported the part of *Obadiah*, with his wonted accuracy and chaſteneſs.

HOLLINGSWORTH, as the real *Simon Pure*, approved himſelf a very bad Quaker.

COVENT-GARDEN, *Thurſday, Jan.* 2, 1800.

The WISE MAN OF THE EAST. *(Kotzebue* and *Inchbald.)*—VOLCANO, &c.

We have already ſtated our reaſons for poſtponing the Review of this play. We ſhall, therefore, only add, at preſent, that it does not appear to *gain much on the town.*

DRAMATIC INTELLIGENCE.

The long promiſed Drama of *Joanna of Montſaucon*, preparing for repreſentation at Covent-Garden, by Mr. CUMBERLAND, appears to be at length in a train of ſpeedy production. The Muſic is compoſed by Mr. BUSBY, a gentleman, who has acquired conſiderable celebrity by his laſt year's Oratorio of *Prophecy*. Mr. INCEDON has two ſongs, one martial, the other amatory. Miſs WATERS two ſongs in the *Penſoroſo* ſtyle. Mr. MUNDEN, as the leader of a band of Mountaineers, ſings a humourous ditty. Appropriate Symphonies precede each Act.—There have been two muſical Rehearſals in the courſe of the week, and a full Rehearſal is expected to take place on Monday.